

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 188 742

PS 011 456

TITLE New Approaches to Education of Children of Pre-School Age. Report of a Regional Meeting of Experts (Bangkok, Thailand, September 4-12, 1978).

INSTITUTION United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Bangkok (Thailand). Regional Office for Education in Asia.

PUB DATE 79

NOTE 84p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Developing Nations: *Early Childhood Education: Foreign Countries: *Preschool Children: *Program Development: *Regional Characteristics: *Regional Programs: Research

IDENTIFIERS *Asia: *Oceania

ABSTRACT

This report of the regional meeting of experts in Asia and Oceania provides review of presentations from different countries, a review of research and pedagogical considerations, and recommendations concerning new approaches for early childhood education. Particular reference is made to disadvantaged rural and urban populations. Also included are an overview of the conclusions of group discussions; the conference agenda; lists of conference documents and conference participants; and copies of the address speeches. (SS)

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New Approaches to Education of Children of Pre-School Age

Report of a Regional Meeting of Experts
Bangkok, 4-12 September 1978

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UNESCO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EDUCATION IN ASIA AND OCEANIA
BANGKOK, 1979

[Unesco] Regional Meeting of Experts on New Approaches
to Education of Children of Pre-School Age,
Bangkok, 4-12 September 1978.

*New approaches to education of children of pre-school
age; report.* Bangkok, Unesco, 1979.

72 p.

1. PREPRIMARY EDUCATION - ASIA. I. Unesco Regional
Office for Education in Asia and Oceania, Bangkok.
II. Title.

372.21



New Approaches to Education of Children of Pre-School Age

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BANGKOK, 1979

Appreciation is expressed to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the photographs which illustrate this book.

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Published by the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and Oceania
920 Sukhumvit Road
Bangkok, Thailand

Printed in Thailand

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

In pursuance of Resolution 1.151 of the General Conference at its Nineteenth Session, Unesco convened a Regional Meeting of Experts on "New Approaches to Education of Children of Pre-School Age". The Meeting was held at the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and Oceania, Bangkok, Thailand, from 4 to 12 September 1978. This Report is a contribution by Unesco to the International Year of the Child (1979).

The expansion of the formal education systems to enhance access to education, has been a feature of all developing countries in the region over more than two decades. Spectacular increases of enrolment have occurred in all these countries, particularly as the educational delivery systems have been extended to reach rural areas, where the majority of the population lives.

Especially since the United Nations Declaration for the Second Development Decade, all developing countries in the region have developed socio-economic policies incorporating egalitarian principles and social justice.

The expansion of education systems into rural areas, the pronounced emphasis on the education of girls and women, and special programmes for minority groups and urban slum populations are examples of the manifestations of these policies for social justice in the education sector.

While this surge of activity has been prominent for learners of school-going age and, in the last decade, increasingly for drop-outs and for out-of-school youth as well, national concern in most developing countries for the education of children of the age group 0-5/6 years, has appeared only very recently, although individuals and interested groups had initiated micro-scale actions for these populations decades ago.

The motivations for these new national concerns find their basis, again, in the overall concerns for social justice and equity.

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However, they may have been specifically motivated by a variety of reasons, such as large drop-outs from the primary school system and poor achievement of learners from disadvantaged populations; the need for custodial and other care for little children whose mothers are engaged in the economic sphere, recognition of the irreversible consequences of malnutrition; or, in a few countries, a comprehensive and integrated view of total human resources development which would incorporate all ages in the development effort.

Following on national concerns, some developing countries in the region have already established large-scale national programmes for the education of children of pre-school age, while in others, development has taken place on a more limited scale.

In many developing countries, the earlier limited activities in early childhood education have generally been urban-centred and catering to elite populations. The models utilized have frequently emanated from developed countries. With the thrust to serve the broad masses of the population, Member States have attempted to initiate new approaches to early childhood education, taking into account the economic, social, and cultural milieu in which these populations exist. In some countries, there is a further movement away from a compensatory approach to one of prevention of the factors that may inhibit the achievement of the total potential of children because of disadvantaged conditions. Thereby these countries have attempted the development of the whole child in his or her own social and cultural environment, including efforts to promote the biological, physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth of the child, and of the ecology in which the child lives.

Objectives

The main purpose of the Meeting was to exchange and study experiences among the Member States in the Asia and Oceania region, in regard to new approaches which may have been adopted for early childhood education, with particular reference to disadvantaged rural and urban populations; and to provide suggestions for future practical programmes of action.

Participation

In preparation for the Meeting, each Member State was requested to send in a report on the status of early childhood education, and a case study on a project for the delivery of early childhood education to learners in disadvantaged areas. Sixteen Member States responded by sending in these country reports. Twenty participants from 16 Member States and ten observers from interested agencies, including those from the UN System, attended the Meeting. (Vide Annex I for the List of Participants and Annex III for the List of Documents). Two resource persons, Mrs. Mina Swaminathan (India) and Dean (Dr.) Aurora G. Corpuz (Philippines) assisted the Meeting.

Organization

The Meeting was inaugurated on the morning of 4 September 1978. After a welcome address by Mr. A. Chiba, Deputy Director, Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and Oceania, Dr. Sippanondha Ketudat, Secretary-General, National Education Commission, Thailand, delivered the inaugural address (Vide Appendix I and II for Addresses).

Dr. Sippanondha referred to the noble goals of education associated with human beings living in harmony with the environment, and how these goals would apply equally to little children; the rapidly changing structures and roles within the family and its implications for the care of young children; the need to consider the development of the child in the context of all the basic needs; the preparation for learning to learn; and the problems of extending services to reach disadvantaged populations.

Following the inaugural, the Meeting assembled in the first plenary session to elect its office bearers, who also constituted the Steering and Drafting Committee of the Meeting.

The following officers were elected unanimously: Chairman Mr. Hassan Pasha Shartfi (Iran); Vice Chairmen: Mrs. Chandra Kala Kiran (Nepal); Dr. Pairat Decharin (Thailand); Dr. Felisa Añonuevo (Philippines); Mr. Syed Siddiquir Rahman (Bangladesh); Rapporteurs: Mrs. Patricia Hoong (Singapore); Miss Joan Fry (Australia). Due to official duties, Dr. Pairat Decharin (Thailand),

had to withdraw from the Meeting. He was replaced as a Vice Chairman by Mrs. Happy Sunyoto (Indonesia), by unanimous consensus of the Meeting. Professor Hugh Philp, representing the Bernard van Leer Foundation, was specially invited to attend the Steering/Drafting Committee Meetings. Mr. J. Ratnaike, Educational Adviser, Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and Oceania, was appointed Secretary to the Meeting.

The plenary sessions of the first two days, and the daily informal post-lunch sessions, were devoted to the presentation and discussion of country status reports and case studies, and to the exposure to a variety of materials from countries within the region and outside. A reference library was also established containing documents on theoretical and practical aspects, and teaching/learning materials from several countries. In particular, Robert Hess, Speaking of Early Childhood Education, McGraw Hill, 1977, the VTR presentation on pre-school education for Maori children in New Zealand, the slide/tape presentations on the use of toys and games in Columbia (UNICEF) and India (NCERT), the slide/commentary presentation on the Mobile Creche Programme for Working Mothers in India, and the Child Development Centres in Thailand, were among those which proved to be specially useful in stimulating discussion, and preparing participants for the more detailed and specific discussions in their group sessions. The plenary sessions on the third day were utilized to review the two Working Papers (Regional Survey and Conceptual Base), in the light of the country presentations and the discussions of the two previous days.

On the fourth day the Meeting divided into two groups to consider the substantive aspects of the Agenda Item 4 (Vide Annex II). Each group considered all items of the Agenda and the Rapporteurs synthesized a single report from the two group reports. The Meeting returned to plenary sessions to consider "International Co-operation in Pre-School Education" the Agenda Item 5, and to approve the Draft Final Report.

The Steering/Drafting Committee met daily after the sessions, reviewed the day's work, suggested improvements, and processed the materials that were to be included in the Final Report. The Annotated Agenda for the Meeting (Vide Annex III) was interpreted and detailed in association with the Steering/Drafting Committee.

The Report

The Review of Country Presentations (Chapter Two), and the Review of Research (Chapter Three), have been based upon documentation available to the Meeting, and hence are not comprehensive reviews of the region. Chapter Four is an outcome of the detailed group discussions on the Agenda Item 4. Chapter Five, Recommendations, highlights aspects that were particularly emphasized at the Meeting.

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made of the reference materials, teaching/learning aids, video-tape, slide-tape and tape materials, mentioned above, which the participants had fruitful exposure to during the Meeting.

The Meeting recorded its appreciation of the generous contribution by UNICEF, which not only provided a variety of significant materials to the Meeting, but also sponsored four additional participants.

The Meeting expressed its appreciation of the invaluable service rendered by the Resource Persons, and thanked Unesco for convening the Meeting and organizing it so effectively.

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS: AN OVERVIEW OF PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN THE REGION

The focus of this Survey is on disadvantaged populations in the developing countries. Several remarks and conclusions do not refer to the Socialist countries, where there are extensive national programmes for children below 6 years of age. Nor do they apply to Australia, New Zealand, except in connection with special programmes for disadvantaged minority groups. The survey is based on country reports and case studies, and discussions on these, presented at the Meeting.

Status

In all countries of the region, there is a commitment to free and universal, and in some cases compulsory, primary education, beginning at the age of 5 or 6 or 7 years, for durations of three to seven years. In the Socialist countries of the region, the Governments have a constitutional, legal or financial obligation for early childhood education, but only a few of the other countries have a national policy for the young child. Governmental initiative and national political interest in the matter have been of fairly recent origin in most of the countries. As a result, early childhood education, which historically has developed in the private sector, has mostly remained there. Governmental programmes for young children, stemming from concern for children, and concern for the disadvantaged, have now begun to take root in almost all the countries.

Derived from *Working Paper I* (ROEAO-78/PRESCED/5/I).



Private sector

Historically, kindergarten or nursery schools have grown up to meet the needs of the urban middle class populations. Varying in numbers from about 40 in Nepal to several thousands in India, these schools have remained confined to urban centres, where they generally cater to the upper and middle classes, and increasingly to the aspiring lower middle classes who seek to ensure success for their children in school through early education. The nature of the curriculum, programmes, methods, materials, qualifications of teachers, fees charged etc. vary enormously, the quality of education imparted not necessarily bearing any relation to the fees charged. Almost all of them draw their inspiration from Western models, and adhere to systems like the Montessorian, Froebelian, or more eclectic "nursery" systems. This has affected the nature of the material and methods used. Instruction in English language is often a matter of prestige. A common and disturbing trend in all the countries is the increasing stress, often in response to parental pressure, on early introduction to formal learning and preparatory work for literacy, amounting to direct instruction of the

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three Rs. In some countries, standards are laid down for the private sector by the Governments, as in Rep. of Korea, but are difficult to enforce. In competitive economies, invidious comparisons are always made, and it seems difficult to gain popular acceptance of very different models of early childhood education so long as there is no control over the private sector.

Definition

In most of the countries, there is considerable vagueness about defining the disadvantaged. A movement towards a sharper definition may be forthcoming for three major reasons:

a) Reach. A large proportion of the population in most of the developing countries of the region (as high as 40 per cent in some cases) lives under poverty conditions, and it may not be immediately possible for the Governments concerned to reach all of them. Who should receive priority? As an example, India has identified three target groups "Children in urban slums, tribal areas and rural under-privileged". The first two are fairly easy to identify, but the third is a large, geographically scattered, amorphous group. Several studies have shown that, in the past, child welfare services in the rural area have gone, not to the poorest families, but to the middle-income group consisting of land-owners, artisans, traders etc. There is a growing awareness of this inadequacy, and several countries have initiated programmes for rural areas, for instance Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Philippines, Nepal, Thailand, Indonesia, and Republic of Korea.

b) Curriculum. The programmes and methods in use must also be tailored to respond to the specific sources of disadvantage in each group. For example, the programme for children in remote mountain areas may perhaps need to stress familiarity with a variety of objects, with the concepts and artifacts of modern science and urban living, verbal interaction, skill in manipulation. On the other hand, for children in urban slums or squatter colonies, with problems of overcrowding, congestion, poor living conditions, nuclearization of families, absence of older people in the family, and working parents, more stress may have to be laid on provision and effective use of space, hygiene, orderly living, the creation of a home-like atmosphere

with stable relationships with adult parent-substitutes, understanding of the range of stimuli in the environment etc. Singapore has clearly spelt out the needs of children in affluent urban communities who may be "deprived" in an other than economic sense. Australia has developed special strategies for children living in isolated rural families and for aboriginal children, while New Zealand has evolved an approach based on the culture and life-style of an ethnic minority group. These are illustrative examples which point to the fact that a centralized approach to programme planning may not be adequate.

c) Special groups. Certain groups tend to be ignored in such discussions unless definitions are specific. Among these are: (i) squatters and (ii) working mothers. There is a growing tide of squatter or temporary slum communities in all the major urban areas of the region, whose living conditions are often of extreme deprivation since they forego the benefits of both traditional stable urban and rural living besides being often unemployed and in poverty. Till recently, most Governments in developing countries have made no special provision for these groups. The policy in many developing countries is slowly evolving from slum clearance or removal of squatters, to organized human resettlement, and in some enlightened areas, to slum redevelopment on site. Child care facilities are usually conspicuous by their absence. (iii) In most developing countries of the region, women play an important role in the economy, working in fields, forests, fisheries, home or unorganized industries, services and self-employment. However, due to the fact that they may not be formally employed as wage earners in the organized sector of the economy, they are usually not enumerated as "working women". The magnitude of the female labour force is hence lost sight of. With urbanization, universal primary schooling, nuclearization of the family and other trends, often young children are cared for by older children (girls at the expense of their own education), or by very young siblings, or otherwise inappropriately. Only the Socialist countries in the region have a well-defined policy in this matter. A few countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, India, Rep. of Korea, Pakistan, Thailand, have begun work in this area.

Objectives

In most of the developing countries in the region, there is no overriding social or educational philosophy of early childhood education which is spelt out in the form of curricula, methods, materials and training. The reasons for this are several:

a) Multitude of agencies: Numerous agencies have recently been concerned with the young child. Programmes are undertaken directly or sponsored by Ministries or Departments of Health, Community Development, Agriculture, Labour, Social Welfare, and Education, to name but a few. In most of these countries, there has been little direct involvement of the Ministries of Education, and other Ministries have taken the lead. This is reflected in the low priority usually given to the educational components of such programmes, with greater stress on health, nutrition, and community involvement, as in the case of ICDS, (India), the Barangay Nutrition/Health Programme in the Philippines, the Child Development Centres in Thailand, or the Rural Social Services and Mothers' Clubs in Bangladesh.

b) Socialization: The "fitting" of children to the existing system of education appears to be a major goal. In several developing countries, stress is laid on early childhood education as a support for the formal system of education. This has often developed from concern aroused by studies on the high incidence of school drop-outs (Philippines, India, Malaysia). The use of terms like "pre-primary" and "pre-elementary" or "pre-school" reflects this pre-occupation. In most of the countries, the formal education system is highly competitive, elitist, dysfunctional to the task of mass education, and in need of radical reforms. In addition, a virtual double-track system operates, even where private education is legally outlawed. Educators are becoming aware of the mismatch between the professed social and political goals of the society, and the actual behaviours of the school system. Under these circumstances, one may doubt the wisdom of attempting to socialize children effectively to enter the system. On the other hand, if one accepted the goal, one could question whether the existing methods in use at the early childhood level are suited to the task. A clear definition of educational developmental goals, stressing the developmental tasks

of childhood, the development of cognitive processes and coping strategies appropriate to the age, the building of self-confidence, competence, autonomy, motivation and initiative, may be necessary.

Curricula, methods and materials

The lack of clarity in goals is reflected in the confusion at the teaching/learning level, in terms of curricula, methods and materials. Most of the programmes are patterned on the traditional Western nursery school model, with little variation to suit local ecologies of specific groups. There is a growing interest in the use of local indigenous materials, and waste materials, for the production of simple educational kits, but little attempt to use local crafts and arts as a basis for sensori-motor training or aesthetic development is visible. Nor is the programme derived from indigenous life-styles. There is often a subtle devaluing of parents, contrary to the expressed objective of seeking parental involvement. There is an almost universal absence, in the developing countries in the region, of books and printed materials suitable for young children in the local languages, leading to the use of inappropriate foreign material. Theoretical conflicts are reflected visibly at the teaching/learning level. There may be talk of free choice of activity, but in remote rural settings, there are often, in practice, no materials for the children to play with. There may be stress on discussion, individual choice, group problem-solving, democratic procedures and other inter-personal interactions, but in practice the atmosphere may be authoritarian, with the teacher leading a tightly controlled schedule of group activities. Such illustrations can be multiplied, and point to the need for clear statements of goals which must precede the development of curricula and materials.

Teacher preparation

Since programmes of early childhood education in the region have grown under varying auspices, each has developed its own system of training, appropriate to itself. There is considerable variation in the length of training, qualification of trainees, methods of recruitment, pay, content of training and amount of

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supervision. In countries with a longer history of involvement, there has been considerable experimentation and a changing pattern has evolved over the years.

Two interesting trends emerge:

a) Local workers or para-professionals: In all the countries with an expanding programme, there is now a trend to involve local women and girls as early childhood programme workers, often with minimal educational qualifications. This is based both on the realization of the importance of involving the community, and on the logistic difficulties of employing and supervising workers drawn from other areas. (ICDC - India, BHNS - Philippines, TBK - Malaysia, KG Teacher - Nepal and Afghanistan, Child Development Worker - Thailand). Such workers are in many instances paid for, partially or wholly, through community contribution, which may have implications for the selection of client populations. A concomitant difficulty is the need for close and continuous guidance and supervision of such workers.

b) The use of field work: As an essential component in training, field work has been incorporated through a variety of procedures like prolonged exposure to field conditions before or during training (India, Philippines, Thailand, insistence on a period of field work before certification (Nepal), simulated classrooms, concomitant training for community or literacy work, etc. These indicate the value placed currently on developing procedures related to the actual field situations.

However, none of the training programmes appears to include, as a definite component, orientation to the special characteristics of children from disadvantaged groups. This may be necessary not only for teachers coming from other groups, but also for local teachers, because of the often low level of their own education and limited vision.

Supervision

A major problem to which little attention has been given, is the difficulty of adequate supervision, which implies close guidance and monitoring of the field staff, all the more necessary where the programme is widespread, and dependence is placed

on teachers with limited training. In order to reduce administrative costs, the ratio of field staff to supervisors is usually far too high. The background, qualifications and training of supervisory personnel is also a neglected field, though a vital one for development.

Research and evaluation

Two aspects of research are relevant. The first concerns basic studies of a type which is essential for developing the conceptual framework. In this area, little of significance has as yet been accomplished in the developing countries in the region. There is a heavy dependence on foreign researches, mostly emanating from Western countries, and often relating to circumstances which are inappropriate, and from which direct analogies cannot be drawn. Evaluation of programmes is the second aspect. Evaluative studies have been undertaken in some countries, notably India, but are mostly concerned with administrative aspects, delivery of services, identification of clientele, etc., and have not addressed themselves to the outcomes of the programmes on the child. In-built evaluation of some ongoing programmes is a promising feature now being discussed in a few countries (Philippines, Thailand).

Systems approach

Early childhood education can only be one element in a comprehensive strategy to attack the consequences of social disadvantage. It can be, both administratively and conceptually, the point of entry for a range of educational and social services. In most countries, there are some inter-relationships between early childhood education, and the various other agencies and departments which impinge on the young child. However, the weakest link is with the corresponding sub-system of primary (elementary) education. As the linkages with the education system are so weak, there is hardly as yet any question of early childhood education influencing the objectives, goals, methods and structures of primary education. A notable exception is an experimental programme in one State of India (Maharashtra), where pre-school and primary education are being integrated at the level of training. Malaysia is introducing a programme of

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Early Childhood Education in its training of primary school teachers. In view of earlier remarks, it seems safe to say that considerable changes have to be brought about in early primary education, from the point of view of the development of the child. If this is not done, there is danger of an extension of the present dimly perceived conflict between the two systems, with their contradictory goals and procedures, or of primary education swallowing early childhood education and subsuming it, as is already happening in many cases.

Parents and community

The importance of parent and community involvement is widely recognized, but the actual progress in this direction varies considerably in the developing countries of the region, in terms of the nature and extent of relationships and efforts. Community support usually takes the form of provision and maintenance of accommodation and/or equipment, and occasional financial and moral support. There are few instances of group endeavour for improvement of the total environment of the child or of organized pressure for better facilities. With a few exceptions, the goals and methods of parental education are not clearly spelt out at the training stage, nor is there systematic training in methods of communication. A too facile interpretation of parental education in some cases leads to devaluation of the parental role, and thoughtlessness in modifying traditional local practices. In most cases, visible indicators of health and nutrition have proved the best media for establishing strong links with parents, while aspects of mental development have been the most difficult to handle. These remarks form part of the larger question of goals, strategies and methods.

General overview

In terms of the documentation presented to the Meeting, the general picture regarding early childhood education, in most developing countries in the region, is one of considerable confusion in policies, goals, strategies, implementation plans, management aspects, and other dimensions of action for the socially or economically disadvantaged young child. Simultaneously, at least the beginnings of systematic action in the context

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of total socio-economic development and egalitarian principles are also visible in almost all the developing countries in the region. A few of these countries have indeed established nationwide programmes of service to the young child, including early childhood education, as integral components of a national development effort focused on all ages in the population.

Chapter Three

A REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Definitions

The term 'young child' is used in preference to the term 'child of pre-school age', as the former focuses attention on an important developmental stage without reference to an institution which the child may or may not enter at a certain age. This term will refer to the age group 0-6 plus years. The term 'development' will be used in preference to 'education' as the former is a more comprehensive concept including biological, physical, cognitive, affective and social development.

Nutrition and child development

With regard to children in developing countries, the fundamental importance of health and nutrition cannot be over-emphasized. There is abundant evidence of the existence of widespread malnutrition among young children, in certain sections of the population, and especially among girls (1).^{*} There is also massive evidence of the impact that poor health and nutritional status have on mental functioning (1a, 2), social behaviour (3), exploratory behaviour (4), and apathy (5) in infants, and mental and scholastic performance in older children (6, 7, 8, 9). The evidence suggests that cumulative under-nutrition, prolonged during childhood, may also have adverse effects similar to those of severe early malnutrition. Research in early malnutrition conducted during the 50s and 60s drew attention to the possibility of irreversible brain damage being caused to children who are victims of severe malnutrition at certain critical stages of their

Derived from *Working Paper II* (ROEAO-78/PRESCED/5/II).

* Reference numbers in parentheses refer to the list at the end of the report (Appendix III).

lives. Recent findings are less discouraging. Provided there is adequate nutritional supplementation later, even victims of early malnutrition are able to catch up. Nevertheless, though permanent damage may be avoided, the long-term consequences may well be a reduction of potential growth (10). In the reality of disadvantaged conditions, many early malnutrition victims may not get adequate nutrition later unless there are special programmes of supplementation. A similar case can be made out for the impact of frequent infections on the child's long-term health status. Specific deficiencies have even more clearly demonstrable effects. Several million children become blind every year due to deficiency of Vitamin A. Hence the role of health and nutrition in the total development of the young child, is not to be neglected, and should form a basic ingredient of all intervention programmes.

Poverty, learning and child development

In the area of physical development, the evidence is conclusive. However, in the areas of cognitive functioning, social and affective behaviour, and their relationships to socio-economic disadvantage, the situation is less certain. A number of cross-sectional studies show the correlation between poor scholastic achievement; and/or other measures of cognitive functioning, on the one hand, and low socio-economic status (11 to 18) on the other. These are cited as evidence that poverty conditions lead to learning deficits in children. However, these studies must be accepted with considerable caution for the following reasons:

a) Measures: Many of the measures used are school-related, for example, traditional I. Q. tests are closely related to school-type tasks and hence results may tell more about the presence, absence, and/or quality of schooling, than about the child's innate capacity. With young children, school-type tests are not used, but many of the tests may include items or objects with which children of some cultural groups are unfamiliar in their environment, and in relation to which they would naturally perform badly. The expression of innate abilities is inevitably filtered through the local cultural media of language, objects, gestures, customs, etc. So cross-cultural comparisons can only be made if 'culture free' tests are used (19, 20).

b) Concepts: The concept of "disadvantaged" in the cultural and/or cognitive sense, as a consequence of poverty, has been developed in affluent countries where the poor exist in relatively identifiable pockets. In developing countries, where the life-style of the poor is that of the majority, the uncritical adoption of such a terminology is not helpful. It may be more reasonable to talk in terms of differences in cultures and value systems, reflected in differences in a child's language, perception, behaviour, goals etc., rather than in terms of "deficit" or "disadvantaged". An unspoken assumption of many studies based on the concept of "disadvantaged" is that all children must inevitably be socialized to the dominant 'elite' culture, varying by designation as western "technological", "scientific", "modern" etc., and other similar but not identical terms (20s). This point of view may have much to be said for it, but it should be brought out into the open in such discussions, instead of being hidden under the terminology of "disadvantage".

c) Specificity: Global studies, by their very nature, are often descriptive rather than analytic. They point out broad patterns of correlation, but are unable to indicate which are the crucial variables or causative factors concerned. "Socio-economic status" is one such broad label which subsumes a variety of sub-factors within itself. It is not yet clear which of these sub-factors affect learning and development in a child, in which ways, and at what stages. For more illuminating insights, it would be necessary to turn to studies using different methodologies, notably cross-cultural, longitudinal, experimental and observational studies.

Inter-action studies

Studies of mother-child interactions, and the effects on children of maternal behaviour and teaching styles, emphasize the vital role played by the quality and timing of a child's interaction with adults in his or her environment (21). In many cases, social class differences in a child's later educational attainment and cognitive functioning have been observed, but variations within each class lead back to the specific determinants of parental behaviour (22 to 26). One recent study found that while moderate and mild malnutrition made no difference



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to the cognitive functioning of infants aged 12-36 months, the nature of maternal behaviour did. Further, verbal stimulation by the mother as opposed to merely nurturant behaviour, was found to be related to a higher level of cognitive development. In another study, with four year olds, it was found that the amount of verbal and physical aggression manifested by the child was related to the type of discipline favoured by the parents (28). Studies of first-born children indicate that they almost invariably, across all classes, receive a greater amount of verbal attention from parents, and also perform better (28a). Studies of children in orphanages and other institutions as compared to those brought up in homes (29, 30), studies of twins reared in different environments, studies of mentally retarded children reared in institutions and in normal foster homes (31 to 34), and studies of communal child rearing (35), all indicate that the style and quality of verbal interaction, and the emotional atmosphere in which it occurs, significantly influence cognitive development. At the same time, differences in performance which are not shown in infancy, become apparent in later years (36). Adult-child interaction of the right type would play a significant role in development at every stage. The how and when of such interaction seems to be more important than how much or by whom. These findings point to the importance of the earlier period of childhood and the need to involve parents in early childhood programmes. They also have implications for the teaching/learning process and teacher behaviour.

Language studies

Cross-sectional studies also show poor performance in the language of children coming from lower socio-economic groups (37). However, even in such studies, it is observed that comprehension is the same in all groups, though quality and quantity of output may vary (38). In the study quoted earlier, the infants showed no difference in comprehension though they did so in output (39). A study of 'spontaneous' language output of four-year olds of different social groups showed no class differences (40). Students of child language have commented upon the importance of meaning, incentive and context in stimulating appropriate usage in children (41 to 46). In almost all such cases, the

children when exposed to situations where they were required to use language in particular ways, did so, though such forms were not normally found in their spontaneous speech. The importance of the situational factors underlines the communicative role of language. Children use only the forms appropriate or necessary in the everyday context of their lives. Thus, it is not so much a question of poor language development as such, of children belonging to low socio-economic groups, as it is of their not being exposed to situations in which a variety of uses would be elicited. This refers especially to uses which may be appropriate in formal or school situations. It must also be noted that large-scale studies usually make use of structured testing situations, whereas observational studies deal with the contextual use of language. The vast differences in the output of children in these two situations have been clearly demonstrated by the studies of Labov (47). This has significant implications for pedagogy.

Studies of socialization

Studies of socialization draw attention to the role played by parental values and cultural context in the development of values, attitudes and behaviour in children. A study of socialization of children for competence (the three indicators being self-reliance, achievement and responsibility), showed the important role played by parental attitudes, aspirations, and demands on the child. It was found that social and economic factors play an important part in determining the pressures on the child. Parental reinforcement was provided for those skills needed most for economic survival. Achievement was stressed for boys, and responsibility for girls (48). This study also found that the somewhat passive parental attitude was based on a belief in maturation which assumes that children will learn what they need to learn in time, and places less value on formal teaching. Studies of the relationship between child-rearing practices and personality development conducted within a psycho-analytic framework (49, 50), note the impact of certain common aspects of childhood in India, namely, very little pressure for achievement on the child below six, parental respect for the child's innate capacities, and belief in their natural flowering. The total availability of the

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mother in infancy, and the atmosphere of emotional security created by a style of maternal behaviour which "follows" rather than "leads" the child, has been linked to the strength of the elements of trust and warmth in the Indian personality. On the other hand, the child constantly expects and needs support, at first from the mother alone, later on from the extended family or kinship group. These characteristics appear in adult life as heavy dependence or personal relationships, and reliance on communal or collective decision-making and responsibility. Seen from a Western standpoint, this is often described as a lack of initiative, lack of individual responsibility for decision-making and problem-solving, anxiety and fear of isolation from the social group. Without going into clinical detail, it is worth raising the question of the reaction of children reared in such a context to the achievement-oriented culture of school, with its "modern" or "scientific" world-view which stresses individualism and initiative (51). Several studies indicate that school failure, for instance, does not produce the expected negative self-image in the case of children coming from families where such failure is expected as normal (52, 53). On the other hand, planned early childhood experiences may serve as a link between the two worlds and promote attitudes such as problem-solving, decision-making, individual initiative and responsibility, which are valued by the world-view of school (54). However, severe pressures can be set up if there is too much conflict between the goals of the home and of the school. The positive contributions to self-confidence and mental health made by the traditional child-rearing patterns described above cannot be underestimated. These findings draw attention to the importance of convergence of goals between home and school which must be taken into account by any intervention programme.

Intervention studies

With this background, it is worthwhile studying the impact of intervention per se and of various types of early childhood intervention programmes, raising the question whether institutional early childhood education is the only, the best, or even the most appropriate form of intervention, and what the other alternatives are. Almost all studies undertaken so far of early

childhood education programmes have attempted to measure the product rather than to study the process, and most suffer from several methodological defects. Early studies of the Headstart Programme in the U. S. A. found that children with early childhood education experience achieved better in the first year of school, but such differences were wiped out by the end of the third year. A finding from a group of unpublished studies is that children with early childhood educational experiences are socially 'better adjusted' at school (55). But so many variables are involved that it is difficult to draw firm conclusions.

Several evaluations of large-scale early childhood education programmes in India have been undertaken. These concentrate on input-output relationships in terms of delivery of services and other administrative concerns. The results are not found satisfactory by the yardsticks used. No attempts have been made to measure impact on children directly, but parents' perceptions and opinions were elicited. Parents appeared to be uniformly in favour of early childhood education in some form. However, the results are vague and measures doubtful, so little of firm value emerges (56 to 60). Studies evaluating or assessing the various early childhood education models also suffer from similar vagueness. One study showed definite improvement in language development in children exposed to early childhood education, but cautioned that much would depend on the nature of these educational experiences. Another study showed better performance on cognitive measures of children exposed to structured early childhood educational experiences (62). One of the few studies which has attempted to measure directly impact on children, compared those who were given an integrated programme of health, nutrition and an intellectually stimulating education programme, with children who received only health care and nutritional supplement (63). A large number of psychological tests and measures were used, as well as anthropometrical measurements. On every measure, the children of the first group showed greater gains than the latter. Thus there is some basis for assuming that early childhood intervention can have positive results.

Studies of teachers and teaching

The nature and success of different models of early childhood education would naturally be deeply affected by teachers' perceptions of objectives, methods, and their own roles and functions, by teachers' attitudes to learning and development, and by teachers' ability to translate objectives into teaching/learning strategies. Some studies of teachers' attitudes indicate that teachers have low expectations about children belonging to so-called "disadvantaged" groups (64). Hardly any studies have been made of teachers' role perceptions and of the teaching/learning process in relation to this age-group. Experienced observers have said that "teachers tend to teach as they were taught" and observations of pre-school teachers over a wide range of pre-school programmes suggest that teachers; (i) tend to favour the formal method of group instruction rather than individual interaction with children; and (ii) tend to support formal objectives of teaching or preparing to teach the three R's to young children, in which they are amply supported by parental aspirations and pressures. One of the very few studies in this area (65) reports that teachers in an integrated early childhood educational programme, involving several components of activity, reported "pre-school education" as the most favoured activity and the one with highest correlation to perceived utility of training. The same study also reports that the teachers' sensitivity to children in developmental situations was not related either to their educational level or teaching experience, but appeared to be a personal variable. An ongoing evaluation of teacher training programmes for early childhood education (66) may be able to show whether such sensitivities can be inculcated through appropriate training. Without answers to such fundamental questions, planning for teacher preparation may be a leap in the dark.

Other forms of intervention

Three other types of intervention may be briefly noted:

a) Home intervention: Studies of home intervention (enabling mothers to work more effectively to ensure their children's mental development) have shown very encouraging results in terms of I. Q. gains (67, 68). Such programmes are also desirable because the gains would spread outwards to other children in the

family, and eventually alter child-rearing methods in the community.

b) Use of mass-media: Studies of the impact of Sesame Street (an education Television programme for young children in the U. S. A.) are inconclusive in terms of direct gains, but suggest that the mass media may be more effective as a supportive measure. An evaluation of the SITE educational television in India (though intended for higher age-groups) is also inconclusive as regards direct gains (69), but lends support to the use of mass media as a promotional measure.

c) Later interventions: Several programmes of compensatory education have been undertaken for older age-groups (6-14 years) in various countries (70). Almost all of them comment on the desirability of mutually supportive programmes including early childhood education, home intervention, social services and welfare measures.

Priorities and implications for action

This brief review of trends in research into various aspects of early childhood development, based on documentation available to the Meeting, would seem to bring to light major priorities such as these:

- the need for an integrated approach to the young child including all aspects of his or her development;
- the vital role of appropriate adult-child interaction at every stage of child development;
- the significant role of parents and other factors in the child's cultural and natural environment;
- the need for mutually reinforcing strategies;
- the importance of the earliest period of childhood (0-3 years).

The following specific implications for action may be highlighted:

a) Skilled personnel play a vital part in programmes for the development of the young child. Evolution of low-cost models



for developing countries must stress the use of equipment which is abundantly available in all ecological areas. But there can be no cutting down on the investment either in the basic training or in the continuing guidance and reinforcement of personnel who need skills to work not only with children at several age-levels, but equally with parents and families.

b) To achieve convergence of goals, close and sympathetic study of parental attitudes, values and cultural backgrounds is necessary. Communication must be an essential part of the process of child development. Strategies and models must be in harmony with local cultures.

c) An integrated approach using mutually reinforcing strategies would imply that dependence should not be placed only on institutional programmes such as "pre-school" early childhood education, but a mixture of many methods has to be evolved including measures to enhance parents' economic capability, health services, supplementary nutrition at least in the short run, promotion through mass media, parent education, and home intervention.

Chapter Four

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Policies and strategies

All developing countries in the region have evolved national policies to deal with the problems of poverty, focused on disadvantaged populations, but only some have policies directly affecting young children. It is therefore necessary to see how programmes for disadvantaged children, including early childhood education, can be fitted into these policies, in spite of limited resources.

In the context of early childhood education, the term "disadvantaged" which appears in national policy statements, should be viewed as a description of factors which prevent attainment of the full innate potential for the development of every child. Measures of attainment specific to certain groups should not be used to stress deficits or deficiencies in other groups, but there should be appreciation of the differences in the social, cultural and economic milieu, some of which may hamper full development, or act as barriers towards full participation in the wider society. In this context, it should be mentioned that there is a growing awareness that it is necessary to acknowledge the traditional learning patterns and abilities of all groups of people and to utilize these strengths in the implementation of programmes for the child with the family (i. e. family-centred rather than child-centred). Such programmes may be seen as a vehicle for social reform, in that they could affect the lives of both parents and children, and thus the community.

The general goals could be summarized as optimizing the opportunities for each child to attain his full potential. More specifically, in terms of disadvantaged groups, it may be defined as the effort to compensate for the growing inability of families to fulfill completely their responsibilities in child-rearing in all

its aspects, and to make use of available facilities for child care. General goals may be described in terms of intellectual, social, emotional, physical, aesthetic and spiritual development of the child, with emphasis on health and nutrition in areas where disadvantage is largely synonymous with poverty. Preparation for formal education at school is also perceived to be an important goal, but placed in the context of the role of early childhood education in the framework of lifelong education.

It is desirable to set up specific goals when outlining strategies for those groups who may suffer from disabilities in any sphere. In this context:

- a) Programmes should be directed to disadvantaged groups, which may be broadly categorized as:
 - i) poverty groups as defined by established poverty levels in each country, which could include landless labour and other rural poor, rural migrants and squatters, plantation workers, low-income working mothers, urban slum dwellers, and those in low-income housing estates, industrial workers, refugees, and minority and tribal groups, depending upon the particular country situation;
 - ii) those who are disadvantaged within the total community because of individual physical, social, mental or emotional handicaps, other than those produced by poverty situations.

The former group may be of greater concern to the developing countries in the region, while the latter may be of concern to those which are more developed.

b) Strategies for the delivery of services to reach children in the disadvantaged groups might include those that are home based, community based or institution based. All programmes, irrespective of their base, in the home, community or institution, should incorporate integrated services for the development of the child, including health, nutrition and education. They should be directed towards the child within the family, and where appropriate, to the child and to his family, with special programmes for children without families. The total age-range, from birth

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to 6+ years, should be covered by the services. Home-based programmes, which are costly in terms of both manpower and funds, may be of greater interest to the more developed countries, while the other two models are more applicable in all countries. However, they need not be mutually exclusive. Institutional programmes which use the parents and other family and community members as workers in early childhood education, have been shown to be effective in some countries, and is a strategy that "spills over" into the home and the community. Such a strategy could be low in cost and specialized manpower, and could have substantial multiplier effects for social development.

c) For the development of programmes within a consistent framework, it will be necessary to:

- i) identify specific groups within each country and establish priorities for their attention;
- ii) identify agencies which are largely involved;
- iii) identify agencies which should be involved;
- iv) encourage communication among agencies to:
 - promote co-ordination in the delivery of services;
 - develop physical resources;
 - promote manpower planning and staff training;
 - influence urban and rural planning;
 - raise the status of parents and promote parent education programmes;
 - influence the use of mass media to support objectives;
 - develop priorities in order to gain Government support, especially for those most in need.

d) Co-ordination should be established at the national, State and local community levels, and should involve government and non-governmental agencies. Where appropriate infrastructures do not exist they should be developed together with the prerequisite human resource competencies, by whatever possible means.

e) Agencies delivering services should be acceptable to particular countries and communities.

f) Strategies for community participation should be developed within the range of services operating in any area, and be based on the recognition of the central role of the local worker including the parent. They should provide for local decision making about priorities, participation at all levels of planning, administration, and day-to-day management, and not merely physical participation by the community. These might be achieved both by external agencies who initiate activities, and by local community workers. With such community participation, the child can become the instrument of education of the parents. Conflicts and tensions between home and school which develop in the child's mind as a result of divergence of home-school goals and values, can only be resolved by close interaction to build up understanding. Whatever strategy is used, the local community should be encouraged to make a positive contribution to the programme, but the financial burden should be within its capacity to pay.

g) Whether parents are involved as local workers or not, the continuity between institutional early childhood education and informal education in the home should be maintained, involving enhanced efforts towards appropriate parental education for the purpose.

h) Continuity between the institution for early childhood education and primary school is essential for the child's stability, mental health, development and education. This is currently viewed in terms of the "pre-school" being a preparatory agency for the primary school, but the element of co-operation, and the links which would influence both levels, need to be fully explored.

i) Early childhood services could become the focus for other services arising from community needs and aspirations. However, they may need to be provided by the Government or other agencies, where they do not have a high priority within a particular needy community. A balance could then be brought about between national policies and local aspirations.

Planning, organization, implementation and evaluation

Having looked at the policies related to disadvantaged populations and clarified some strategies related to them, it becomes necessary to make practical suggestions for programmes such as the following. The implications of these suggestions for decentralized planning, organization and evaluation should be stressed, in particular the prerequisite establishment in disadvantaged populations of the necessary competencies that will enable them to undertake such actions:

a) Persons involved in the programme planning process should be field workers, parents, members of the community, other professionals and national level planners. In particular, parental goals, aspirations and expectations for children, as well as teachers' expectations, should be taken into account.

b) The planning process should take into account the specific institutions and infrastructures that would need to be strengthened or established to support the various aspects of implementation.

c) To bridge the gap between planning and implementation there must be an effective two-way communication, both horizontal and vertical.

d) For more effective use of material and human resources, a team approach within and/or between agencies, at a regional, local or institutional level, may be developed. This would facilitate referral services and access to resources.

e) Sources of funding should be explored, but in mobilizing financial resources, the emphasis should be towards self-reliance at all levels.

f) Implementation of policy should be flexible, and a range of programmes should be considered complementing the diversity of differences in various sections of the population.

g) Supervision, monitoring and evaluation should be an integral part of early childhood programmes. Supervision requires particular emphasis in its contribution to quality improvement of field implementation. Effective supervision is an essential requirement for success in implementation. Supervisory

staff need to be carefully selected in terms of not only academic and practical competence, but also in terms of qualities of leadership, and abilities in problem solving. The ratio of supervisory staff to field staff, and distances of operation, should be such that effective sequential and continuous quality improvement would be feasible. Monitoring and evaluation should aim to measure the gap between planning goals and implementation, should be continuous and on-going, and should involve the community intimately. Monitoring, in particular, should be based upon pre-established "enabling objectives"; which would be intermediate objectives which move the programme towards planning goals. The results of evaluation should be widely circulated to facilitate future planning and implementation.

h) Support for policies and programmes should be developed through sustained and extensive efforts towards enhancing public awareness of the need for early childhood programmes.

Curriculum development

Curricula should be developed within the framework of Governmental policies for early childhood education, and the realities of the constraints for their implementation, particularly in the context of disadvantaged populations. Some of these constraints are the inability of personnel to implement; the lack of material, space, and time resources and infrastructures to support implementation; and the expectations of parents, and society at large. Who should evolve the curricula will vary from country to country, and may range from groups or teams of specialists, field practitioners and community members, to curriculum development by the community itself as it works towards meeting its own needs, and seeking specialist assistance when it so desires. Whatever the pattern, the importance of decentralized development is emphasized.

In this context the following are general guidelines for the design of curricula and teaching/learning materials:

a) In developing comprehensive curricula, particularly for disadvantaged groups, it will be necessary to establish objectives by examining research findings, surveying the characteristics of the particular children concerned, examining existing educational

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practices, consulting with appropriate professional specialists, developing materials for specific ages and particular objectives, and validating the materials produced.

b) Curricula must be designed in accordance with the general principles of child development. However, it should be noted that children's competencies and developmental characteristics have to be defined and studied in different socio-cultural settings before programmes can be planned. It is essential to know what skills, behaviours, perceptions, attitudes and values etc. , children have, and the mechanisms by which these are built up in family and community interactions. Curricula have to be evolved with particular reference to the needs of development of the child living in the family and the community. Some relevant considerations in this connection are:

- the definition of attributes like independence, competence, self-reliance in various cultural contexts;
- the identification of developmental tasks of childhood;
- the relationship between traditional child-rearing practices and the developmental tasks of childhood;
- the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values implicit in these developmental tasks;
- the effects of sibling rearing, multiple mothering and the extended family in general, on significant aspects of child development;
- the relationship between family interaction, cultural setting and positive self-concepts;
- the convergence/divergence between the goals, values and expectations of home and school.

c) The curriculum should be based on an understanding of children's needs. These needs may be divided into primary or basic needs, and secondary or derived needs. Secondary needs again are of two types, those common to all, and those specific to each culture. The curriculum, though drawn from these needs should be designed to complement the child's home experience. The curriculum should provide opportunities for the child to

acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values essential to live effectively in his or her own society and culture.

d) The role of early childhood education in the total development of the child should be clearly understood. While the curriculum must support the child in absorbing his or her own culture, it must also widen experiences and provide access to the world beyond the home, the community, and the present. In so doing, the child will be enabled to meet change and will be changed by the experience. Early childhood education will therefore itself contribute to social change. The design implications of these dual goals are far from simple or linear, and involve a complex series of decisions for which participation of local personnel, including parents and policy decision-makers, is essential.

e) The curriculum must incorporate what is known about language acquisition, concept development and discovery learning, from findings of research done on the particular target populations.

f) The child may be exposed, at the appropriate stage, to language other than his own. In any culture, and particularly in multi-cultural societies, this is a complex process, and may at times lead to situations of conflict. However, this could also lead to change which is essential for both the child and the society.

g) The framework of any curriculum should be based on an appreciation of the great value of play in children's learning and development. While the central activity in all curricula is play, the forms of it can vary with the nature of the goals, general or specific, to be attained; the developmental stages; cultural differences; and the available resources.

h) The methodology of teaching/learning should capitalize on children's strengths rather than on deploring their weaknesses. The role of institutionalized or other forms of early childhood education should be to complement, rather than duplicate, children's home-acquired competencies, skills, behaviours, attitudes, perceptions and values. In this context, models of early childhood education appropriate in one situation or setting, should

not be merely repeated in others, but should be critically evaluated for appropriateness.

i) Teaching/learning styles must be derived from the culture and life-styles of the community concerned. The approach to the teaching/learning process should be family-centred rather than child-centred, viewing the child within the family as the basic unit. The use of appropriate teaching styles is as important as the use of local low-cost materials. A harmony of style of functioning between the home and other learning environments should be sought.

j) The divergence noted between implementation in the field and stated objectives, priorities or curricula, can be largely attributed to the element of teacher perception, participation and identification with the goals, besides factors such as availability of materials and supervision. This can be described as a training and a supervision gap. The curriculum development process has to take this into account, by increasing participation of field workers and establishing mechanisms for decentralized curriculum development. It also means that the competencies of those participating in decentralized curriculum development have also to be enhanced, either "on the job" or prior to undertaking the exercise.

k) The relationship to formal learning needs to be kept in mind in developing curricula for early childhood education, but more important is the relationship to lifelong learning. Available knowledge suggests that formal learning is best begun at approximately the age of six, allowing for variations in individual ability. However, ongoing researches may reveal that it is possible to begin earlier, at age four or five years. The readiness for formal learning, (such as the ability to relate written symbols to objects or sounds), has two components: (i) physiological readiness, where the evidence suggests that it is not useful to begin formal learning before such readiness is attained; and (ii) cultural readiness, which in preliterate societies where such symbolic associations are not freely available, may be a quantum jump for the child, and has to be taken into account.

l) Effective institutions and infrastructures to execute curriculum development, especially at decentralized levels,

would need to be strengthened or established, and pre-requisite competencies nurtured.

Production of books and materials for children

Appropriate literature, materials and equipment, based on relevant research findings, are essential for developing effective programmes of early childhood education. There is a severe lack of such materials in the developing countries of the region. In regard to the production of such materials, the following guidelines are suggested:

- a) As far as possible, these materials should be developed by teachers and others, from locally available resources. Parents, older children, and others may participate in, and contribute to this production process. Appropriate materials from outside the local environment may also be useful in a number of ways. Prototype materials at a national level, based on research findings, may also be developed. Institutions for researching, evolving, producing and evaluating such literature, materials and equipment at low cost, should be reinforced or established, manned by appropriate multi-disciplinary teams of experts.
- b) The development of appropriate teaching/learning materials, including books, should be included as an integral part of training programmes. This would ensure that personnel acquire the necessary skills, and understand the purpose, value, and appropriate use of materials. They would be in a better position to evaluate materials, and to appreciate the educational possibilities of locally available materials.
- c) Materials for teachers, (including books, manuals, visuals, pamphlets, newsletters, periodicals etc.), should be easily available as a means of disseminating useful information of research findings.
- d) In the development and production of literature for children, special attention should be given to the cultural heritage of each society and also to the everyday events of children's lives. Folk literature, songs and drama are a rich source for developing such literature.

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e) Effective infrastructures for the deployment and delivery of children's literature and teaching/learning materials and equipment need to be reinforced or established so that the produced materials reach the children, especially in disadvantaged areas.



Preparation of personnel

The requirements of mass diffusion as well as the integrated consideration of the biological, physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of the child demand that a variety of personnel be involved in early childhood education.

Among those who need to be prepared are educational professionals and para-professionals, child care workers, community development and other field workers, supervisors, administrators, medical professionals and para-professionals, trainers of trainees, research workers, and parents. Whatever the level of responsibility, the content of preparation must be

comprehensive, in order to appreciate the respective roles of other personnel working in the field, and to ensure an integrated delivery of services.

The crux of effective implementation lies with the teacher, hence the overwhelming importance of preparation of personnel.

For preparation of these personnel a number of guidelines are worthy of consideration:

a) In view of the shortage of finances and of specialized staff, and the urgent need to prepare large numbers of professional and para-professional workers to implement rapidly a mass programme for the disadvantaged child without dilution of quality, systematic strategies for mass training programmes have to be developed. In addition to regular full-time training, these may include the use of the following:

- i) mass media and forms of distance learning;
- ii) mobile teams of competent supervisors/trainers;
- iii) 'snowball' or 'echo' methods (training of key personnel at regional levels who then repeat the process at a lower level);
- iv) printed materials;
- v) decentralized curriculum development as a training technique;
- vi) continuous in-service education, on-the-job training and internship;
- vii) parent resources;
- viii) 'sandwich', 'smorgasbord' and 'cafeteria' courses;
- ix) decentralized resource centres for self-learning;
- x) need-based workshops.

b) The utilization of parents as para-professionals in community-centred early childhood education provides an effective source of committed personnel. The corresponding preparation programmes need to be specially designed taking into account the variations in the situations from which the parents come.

c) Attention needs to be paid to the selection of personnel to be prepared, to ensure that it will be possible to develop in them the necessary awareness, sensitivity and understanding. In selection, personal attributes such as attitudes to children and the ability to integrate with the local culture should receive greater emphasis than mere academic attainment. It should also be recognized that the status and employment, remuneration and opportunities at various levels will influence the size and quality of the available candidates.

d) Since personnel usually tend to teach as they were taught, it is important to ensure that the methods used in their preparation incorporate those methods which will be ultimately expected of them. It is therefore suggested that all preparatory programmes make use of the following elements:

- i) exposure to real situations at the earliest possible moment;
- ii) the introduction of theory, preferably based on country-specific research data, drawn from and related to practical experience;
- iii) provision for regular and frequent interaction between the trainers and the trainees;
- iv) field supervision as a continuing and integral component of training;
- v) special training in developing community awareness and support for early childhood programmes.

e) Training of all types of personnel should include awareness of physical, mental, social and emotional attributes in children.

f) In designing training programmes, it is desirable to take into consideration the perceptions of various people about the roles and functions of the trainees. Among the persons who need to be consulted include: the trainees, field workers, trainers, children, parents, resource consultants.

g) Since the success of early childhood programmes depend ultimately on the quality of personnel, the teaching/learning

styles of personnel and their characteristics must be taken into account in designing curricula and training courses. This implies a decentralized approach both to curriculum development and to the training of personnel. The experiences gained from supervision, from field experience and from earlier training courses should be fed back into the design of future training programmes. Many so-called child-centred curricula generally ignore the fact that only a model that genuinely fits the teachers' own perception, understanding and style will be effectively implemented. The 'ready-made' basket of skills or techniques which the teacher can apply to 'any' situation, should be critically evaluated in the field.

h) Full-time courses should offer a variety of possible teaching styles and approaches, so that in the course of the programme, the trainee is enabled to know himself or herself better, and to identify the style or styles that would be personally most appropriate.

i) The content of preparation should be derived from the curricula of early childhood education programmes for which personnel are being prepared. Appropriate variants should be built into the content to take into account significant local-specific situations. Such variants have to be developed through intimate interaction between the designers of training programmes and the field situation.

j) Continuity between early childhood and primary education should be brought about not only at the level of linkage between the two levels, but also through training programmes which span both levels. However, while personnel must be exposed to knowledge about all stages of child development, they must concentrate on developing skills for working with specific levels.

k) In addition to the development of professional skills for the work, it is necessary to provide for the development of the trainees themselves, as individuals, with special emphasis on the skills for 'learning to learn' from field experience.

l) The quality of teaching is deeply influenced by the motivation of personnel. Remuneration, conditions of work, and

status of the worker, play a significant role in motivation. However, in view of the limited financial resources in most developing countries, and that any major change in these factors in the near future is unlikely, it is important to strengthen available social and psychological sources of motivation. These include:

- i) close involvement in programme development through a decentralized approach;
- ii) development of a work ethic;
- iii) induction of new recruits into a team of workers;
- iv) internship to enable close association of new recruits with experienced and committed workers;
- v) opportunities to participate in professional gatherings.

This 'motivation problem' is not a serious matter when parents are utilized as teaching personnel for early childhood programmes. Nevertheless even when parents are involved, the above modalities will assist in enhancing quality of implementation.

m) It is important to provide for personnel to improve their professional qualifications and move from one level of responsibility to another within early childhood education, both in the interests of their own development and for a more effective contribution to the field of work. This may be done through a variety of measures, including full-time and part-time courses, correspondence and in-service courses.

n) Strategies to cater to the continuing professional growth of all categories of personnel may include the dissemination of results of new research and curriculum development through publications, in-service courses, meetings and workshops, mutual exchange visiting between classrooms. Modalities for this purpose need to be established, with special capabilities of reaching personnel in remote and disadvantaged areas.

o) It is important that the trainers who design and offer courses for the preparation of personnel are themselves suitably qualified in both theory and practice, and are capable of inter-linking theory with the experiences of field implementation.

p) Institutions and infrastructures for the provision of such preparation need to be strengthened or developed.

Research and evaluation

The purpose of research is not only to create a theoretical basis for action, but also to provide results which can produce change in the course of a programme, and evaluate a programme when it is completed. High-level studies by professional research workers are essential, but teachers, parents and communities can participate in a most valuable way, in meaningful, scientifically worthwhile studies. Research need not be always based on elaborate designs and high-powered statistics.

A great deal of research, particularly action research and evaluative research, must be society- and culture-specific. Research problems can be, and most often should be, generated at the work face, rather than in the laboratory.

Apart from research on certain specific topics, such as the effects of severe protein and calorie deficiency on the brain; certain genetic aberrations, like Down's Syndrome; the consequence of a number of specific diseases, either during pregnancy, like rubella, or after birth, like meningitis, very little work has been completed on the development of young children which is known (as against surmised) to have a general application across all societies and cultures.

A great deal of basic interdisciplinary research has therefore still to be undertaken. Since it is probable that children develop differently in different societies and cultures, much of this research, inevitably, has to be undertaken within each group. Unlike most (but not all) physiological or nutritional research, it is difficult, if not impossible, to generalize in many circumstances.

However, it is possible to distinguish a small number of fundamental areas in which basic research must be undertaken, and to define, in specific terms, the kinds of studies needed. Some of these issues would be related to the factors which affect children's learning and development, such as nutrition and its relationship to learning and development; and the mechanisms of language development in children, which are of universal concern. Others may be of more concern to particular groups, such as the establishment of norms in various areas of development.

There is a second, and somewhat larger set of issues associated with implementation, where action research programmes are urgently needed; and a third set of problems essentially of an evaluative research character. Priorities within each group will vary from country to country, depending upon the level of existing knowledge on the one hand, and national policies and emphases on the other. It is important to establish priorities and avoid duplication, in view of the limited funds and the paucity of research personnel, in most developing countries.

The difference between basic and action research is largely a matter of relative emphasis on the role of the main researcher and others involved in the research process. In action research, parents, teachers and other workers, members of the community, and administrators play a more important role than they may do in basic research. It is important that all concerned should be involved both at the planning stage and at the implementation stage. This will not only help to bring together researchers and decision makers, but will also assist in reducing differences among different types of research workers and different disciplines.





Whatever the selection of types or extent of research may be, the establishment or reinforcing of institutions and infra-structures to undertake such research becomes vital. Related competencies for undertaking the research also need to be enhanced, particularly in the case of action research which reaches disadvantaged areas.

Basic research: Some major issues for research are:

- a) the major factors which determine the development of the child and their relative contribution within each cultural group.
- b) the effects on development of specific factors such as language, parental values, differing patterns of child rearing, different teaching/learning styles within families, and the various forms of disadvantage;
- c) the role of environmental programmes, including early childhood education, and the determination of appropriate intervention strategies;
- d) the interaction of physiological, psychological and medical factors in child development and the action of early childhood programmes on these factors;
- e) the role of social and historical conditions in the development of the child;
- f) the processes of development in the first two years of life;
- g) the role of interaction with adults, in child development, during the first three years of life;
- h) the role of the peer group in child development after the age of three;
- i) the nature and effect of physical education programmes for children;
- j) the universality, or otherwise, of major theoretical models such as those developed by Bruner, Erikson, Piaget, Vigotsky and others.

Action research: The following are only illustrative of the large number and variety of action research activities that may be fruitfully undertaken:

a) Related to curriculum and materials:

- i) the methods of associating local communities, often composed of illiterate or semi-literate people, in curriculum development and materials production;
- ii) on-going evaluation and revision of curricula as a consequence of new basic research findings, and following examination of both short-term and long-term outcomes;
- iii) the relation of the curriculum to the competencies, styles and needs of children, as well as the expressed needs of communities, and the demands of the primary school.

b) Related to methods:

- i) the development of teaching/learning methods which are appropriate to the child, the curriculum, and the skills and styles of the teacher;
- ii) the determination of 'effective' models for teaching/learning methods.

c) Related to teacher education:

- i) the development of the most appropriate pre-service and in-service training sequences for para-professionals working alone, and for those working with trained teachers;
- ii) the most appropriate models for pre-service and in-service training of professional and non-professional teachers.

d) Related to community/parent involvement:

- i) the determination of appropriate ways of involving parents and the community for early childhood education;
- ii) the development of appropriate training programmes.

e) Related to administration and organization:

- i) the determination of the most appropriate administrative and management structures for mass diffusion;

- ii) the determination of the differential effects of various models of early childhood education, on administration and management structures, and vice versa.

Evaluative research: Evaluation can be of three major types:

- a) administrative monitoring;
- b) evaluation of short-term outcomes;
- c) evaluation of long-term outcomes.

The first is essential, and there are as yet very few attempts of the third type. The second type of evaluation is of basic importance, but it should attempt to measure only the outcomes emerging from the stated objectives of a programme, and should not make judgements about outcomes which were not part of the original goals of the programme. Both formative and summative evaluation must be undertaken, as well as revalidation of older models (theoretical and programme).

Parents, professionals and para-professionals can be taught to maintain records for the purpose of formative evaluation. The importance of keeping adequate records as a part of research should be emphasized to all the personnel involved. Continuous self-evaluation of implementation by the personnel involved is an essential dimension, and should be directly linked to both professional growth of personnel, and sequential improvement of programmes.

Communication of research findings: While it is important to undertake several kinds of research, it is equally important to ensure that it is adequately used. For this purpose, it is necessary to build up effective channels of communication between researchers, and policy-makers; administrators; professionals involved in training and programme; teachers, parents, para-professionals; and other possible users.

It is also necessary for all people concerned to be aware of the relevant research being undertaken both within their own country and in other countries.

Chapter Five

RECOMMENDATIONS

General suggestions for action have been expressed in the foregoing Chapter Four, and these would need to be elaborated at the national level to suit design requirements in the countries.

Within the framework of these suggestions for action, and of the earlier chapters, the following recommendations are highlighted for particular attention:

At the national level

1. It is recommended that Member States consider including specifically the concerns for young children in their socio-economic policies, and incorporating in these policies the following:

- the emphasis on children of disadvantaged populations;
- the inclusion of the whole age-range 0 to 6+ years;
- the need to provide integrated services for the development of the whole child, including health, education and nutrition;
- the focus on the child in the family, and where possible, the child and the family;
- the role of early childhood services as vehicles for social change;
- the place of early childhood education as a component of lifelong education.

2. It is recommended that Member States, in developing strategies and plans to carry out these policies, consider that:

- a range and diversity of programmes be developed in recognition of differences that exist among various sections of the population in a country, seeking to complement these differences in order to enable each child



to attain his or her full potential, and all groups to participate in the mainstream of development;

- emphasis be placed on a decentralized approach to programme design, and on the pivotal role of the local worker, including the parent;
- a consistent methodology be built around the principle of 'participation' which would pervade all the programmes;



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- continuity be established with informal education in the home, with other stages of education, and other social services, so that early childhood education could make a significant contribution to social change;
- public awareness of the importance of early childhood be created, and support for the policies and programmes be generated.

3. It is recommended that Member States, in the implementation of policies, plans and strategies, consider the following:

- the development and strengthening of institutions, specially for: research in early childhood; production of literature, materials and equipment for children; production of teaching/learning material for the preparation of personnel;
- the development and strengthening of infrastructures, especially for: mass communication for support of programmes; decentralization of programme and curriculum planning; the delivery of integrated services; the delivery of mass training; continuous supervision, monitoring and evaluation;
- the development and strengthening of competencies required for the above institutional and infrastructure operations;
- the development and strengthening of field experimental projects.

At the International Level

1. It is recommended that, at the request of Member States, Unesco and other interested organizations:

- provide assistance to the above actions at the national level;

2. It is recommended that Unesco:

- establish a net-working of national centres, programmes, and projects for early childhood education in Member

States, with the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and Oceania acting as a facilitating agent;

- arrange for inter-country exchange of experiences through regional and sub-regional meetings and seminars, study visits and placement programmes;
- develop comparative studies in co-operation with Member States;
- set up a data bank and a Clearing House service in the area of early childhood development;
- convene, at regular intervals, a regional panel of early childhood educators and researchers to monitor progress in the region and suggest future directions for action.

3. It is also recommended that Unesco:

- circulate the Final Report of this Meeting widely to national agencies dealing with early childhood programmes both within and outside the education departments;
- present the Final Report of this Meeting to the Unesco Programme of the International Year of the Child.

ANNEXES

AND

Annex I

APPENDICES

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Annex II

AGENDA

1. Opening session.
2. Election of Officers of the Meeting.
3. Study and review of the situation of pre-school education in the region.
4. Study and analysis of the experiences and problems in the delivery of pre-school education to disadvantaged populations and suggestions for future action.
 - i) Policies and strategies;
 - ii) Planning, organization and implementation of action;
 - iii) Production of books and materials for children;
 - iv) Training of personnel;
 - v) Research;
 - vi) Evaluation.
5. International Co-operation in Pre-School Education.
6. Adoption of the Report of the Meeting.

Annex III

ANNOTATED AGENDA

Agenda Item 3 : Study and review of the situation of pre-school education in the region

Major characteristics of new approaches focused upon disadvantaged population;

Major successes and failures; reasons for successes and failures; major problems and issues; future directions of movement.

Agenda Item 4 : Study and analysis of the experiences and problems in the delivery of pre-school education to disadvantaged populations and suggestions for future action

i) Policies and strategies

Motivation for policies; relationship of policies to a national poverty strategy; emphasis on disadvantaged populations; definition of disadvantaged populations; policies pertaining to 'whole child' approach; policies pertaining to interministerial co-operation; strategies for reaching disadvantaged populations; centralized, decentralized planning and organization; strategies for infrastructure establishment; strategies for co-ordination of implementation; strategies for community participation.

ii) Planning, organization and implementation of action

Details of planning at various levels in the programme, in particular for implementation,

monitoring, quality control, evaluation; details of organizational structures at the macro- and micro levels; patterns and modes of communication across various levels; details of implementation including resource allocation and mobilization; effectiveness of quality control; results of evaluation.

iii) Curriculum development and production of books and materials for children

Curriculum guidelines, models, adaptations, utilization of research; particular considerations and priorities being given in relation to poverty conditions in respect of learning needs; utilization of socio-cultural milieu; relationships with parental contribution to development of competencies in children in poverty and other disadvantaged conditions; development of relevant materials for teaching/learning situation, including materials for parents to support learning by children; use of mass media.

iv) Training of personnel

Deriving training from curricula for pre-school education for disadvantaged populations; nature of training of para-educational personnel and parental training in the context of a mass programme and increasing outreach to disadvantaged areas; training of master trainers; materials for training purposes at various levels; supervision of the diffusion of training; management of a national training programme.

v) Research

Foundational and operational research priorities; institutions for conducting such research; translation of research findings into

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design aspects for pre-school education at various levels and for various operations; establishment of cyclic research, design, implementation, evaluation, research operation into programmes of pre-school education.

vi) Evaluation

Various dimensions involved ranging from curricula evaluation to programme evaluation; evaluation of programme contribution to a poverty strategy; indices and techniques for the evaluation of the various dimensions; translation of evaluation data into new designs; management of evaluation at the various levels and for the various dimensions.

Agenda Item 5 : International Co-operation in Pre-School Education

Priorities for co-operation in the various areas of the programmes (policy, planning, implementation, supervision, evaluation, research); data banks of research findings; curricula materials banks; teaching/learning equipment banks; modalities for technical co-operation among developing countries; modalities for utilizing experiences of the developed countries in the region; role of Unesco in this area.

Annex IV

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Information Documents

ROEAO-78/PRESCED/INF. 1	General Information
ROEAO-78/PRESCED/INF. 2	List of Documents
ROEAO-78/PRESCED/INF. 3	Provisional List of Participants
ROEAO-78/PRESCED/INF. 4	List of Reference Readings

Working Documents

ROEAO-78/PRESCED/1	Agenda
ROEAO-78/PRESCED/2	Annotated Agenda
ROEAO-78/PRESCED/3	Schedule of Work (Provisional)
ROEAO-78/PRESCED/4 (Country)	Country Paper -
	Afghanistan New Zealand
	Australia Pakistan
	Bangladesh Philippines
	India Singapore
	Indonesia Sri Lanka
	Iran Thailand
	Korea, Rep. of USSR
	Malaysia Viet Nam
	Nepal
ROEAO-78/PRESCED/5/ I	Working Paper I (Regional Survey)
ROEAO-78/PRESCED/5/ II	Working Paper II (Conceptual Base)
ROEAO-78/PRESCED/5/III	Working Paper III (Indian Experience)

Appendix I

Address by

Dr. Sippanondha Ketudat, Secretary-General,
National Education Commission, Thailand,
at the Opening Session of the Regional Meeting of Experts
on New Approaches to Education of Children of Pre-School Age
4 September 1978

Mr. Deputy Director of the Unesco Regional Office for Education
in Asia and Oceania,
Honourable Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed for me an honour and a very great pleasure to have the opportunity of addressing the distinguished participants of the Regional Meeting of Experts on New Approaches to Education of Children of Pre-School Age.

First of all, may I extend to you a warm welcome to Thailand. We, in Thailand are privileged to have with us such prominent experts from all over Asia and Oceania coming together to exchange views and seek new approaches to pre-school education relevant to social, economic and cultural backgrounds of our region. I wish to congratulate Unesco for convening the meeting on this very important issue. We do hope and expect to benefit from your experience and wisdom in recommending new avenues in the pre-school educational development for the benefit of all of our children.

Let me start from some of my thoughts, not from the point of view of an educator nor a professional in the field of pre-school education since I can claim to be neither, but rather from the point of view of a simple person who has many questions regarding educational policies and development. Some of the issues and questions that I will raise have been gathered from simple minded

folks, from common people who have social consciousness and deep social commitments.

Human life exists in the fine balance of earth, water and sky, enveloped by farmlands, forests, mountains, rivers and seas, including small communities, towns, cities and metropolis which mankind has created. For a simple human life to grow up in the present world and be able to live, love and learn - learn to live with himself, his neighbours and environment - this life needs care and attention, particularly at the early age, so as to grow up and be a happy member of an enlightened society in harmony with nature. The care, the attention and the learning of the young are among some of the noble goals of education.

Human lives are born under a wide variety of environment. Some are born and raised in urban areas with rich parents, while some in the slums, in the jungle and some in rural areas where there is nothing but an old hut in an empty arid farmland. Under such varying conditions, can all these lives grow up to be happy members of our society? Certainly not. Can we do something about it? And how?

Up until recently in Asia and Oceania and still in some parts of our region, a newly born life does not see only its mother and father, but a child is surrounded and cared for by brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents and relatives. The extended family cares for the young ones with tenderness and warmth. But such a condition is fast disappearing. Progress and development - uneven development - has initiated mobility of extended family members. The trend is such that the young ones are left quite alone while fathers and mothers have to work, and brothers and sisters go to school if they can afford it. With such a rapid evolution of family unit, what can an educator do for young children, particularly for those in the disadvantaged urban and rural areas.

Although education is not an all-purpose antibiotic for social ills, the idea that education can be an important means to reduce inequality in a society is still strong and valid in many aspects. In developing countries, education for a child starts a bit too late. Compulsory primary education starts at the age of six or seven. For the disadvantaged ones, little preparation for

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education prior to this compulsory education has been made, since the parents are poor and can afford neither time nor money for the basic needs of their children. Experts have said that inequality starts from the conception. Poor nutrition of the mother and malnutrition at the early age of the baby inhibits brain growth. We are told that if malnutrition occurs at the early age, the damage done is probably irreversible. Thus, nutrition and health care of mothers and babies particularly for the disadvantaged population are fundamental problems relating to pre-school education. Have we started too late in a child's life cycle? Suppose we want to start at an earlier age, do we have ways and means to tackle such a problem? What are the learning needs for mothers? Even if they possess the knowledge, do they have means to overcome the problems? In responding to the problems faced by mothers in bringing up their babies, many agencies both public and private have been trying several approaches. I hope that the exchange of views by the participants would shed a new light on which of these approaches works best under which conditions.

Let us follow along the development of the baby stage to the child stage, and pay particular attention to the disadvantaged population in the rural as well as the urban areas. For such children in most cases, home environment is not conducive to learning, there are few toys to play with, almost no pictures to see. Learning environment is very limited indeed. Children are left with those who know little about child rearing. For those disadvantaged parents with some education and appreciate the values of education as a possible path leading away from their misery, children are expected and forced to learn to read and write before the various organs of their bodies are ready. We even witness this situation in some pre-primary schools. How can we solve such a problem? Are there enough inexpensive toys, inexpensive cartoon books stressing social values relevant to the particular society? How can we prepare our young children so that they are ready to learn and love to learn? Can we make our pre-school, school places for learning and places for joy? Am I asking too much?

If we now turn to statistics of pre-primary education as a guide for our future bearings, keeping in mind that statistics is

not everything and that they must be analysed and treated with care, we would find that in developing countries, relatively little attention has been devoted to children education of pre-school age. In Thailand only about 6 per cent of children of the age group of three to five are enrolled in some of pre-primary schools and child care centres and a large share is in the urban and metropolitan areas. In many developing countries where universal primary education is soon realizable, a question can be raised whether more attention be put to pre-primary preparation of children relative to the upward expansion of secondary education. Independent of this last question, it seems desirable that quantitative expansion of pre-primary preparation is necessary for those aforementioned disadvantaged group.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are a few thoughts and questions that I would like to raise. They are some of the factors that we are faced with which we have to solve. The tasks ahead are challenging. This is the challenge to help prepare our young children, particularly those from the disadvantaged rural and urban areas, and help guiding them along the proper direction to be ready for their lifelong education for their happiness and for the benefit of mankind in the future. I hope that these are some of food for thoughts for your deliberation.

Mr. Deputy Director,
Honourable Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this auspicious occasion, it is my privileged duty to declare the Regional Meeting of Experts on New Approaches to Education of Children of Pre-School Age open.

May I wish the meeting every success. May your deliberation open a new chapter in pre-school educational development in Asia and Oceania.

Thank you.

Appendix II

Welcome Address by

Mr. A. Chiba, Deputy Director,
Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and Oceania

It gives me a great pleasure to extend to you a warm welcome on behalf of Mr. Raja Roy Singh who is obliged to be absent this morning and to convey the greetings of the Director-General. We are honoured also with the presence with us this morning of Dr. Sippanondha Ketudat, Secretary-General, Office of the National Education Commission, who has kindly accepted to inaugurate the Meeting.

It is particularly an honour for me personally to address this opening meeting as a new Deputy Director of this Office because I took up the new function only on Friday last week. Prior to this new assignment, I have been working in Unesco for a long time in charge of Unesco's co-operation with UNICEF whereby I have had to deal with education of children including pre-school children throughout the world. It is in fact a happy coincidence for me that the first meeting I am addressing in this new function is dealing with my major pre-occupation in the past years.

The Meeting is convened in pursuance of the Resolution 1. 151 of the General Conference of Unesco at its 19th Session, whereby the Director-General is requested to convene a meeting of a regional committee of experts in Asia to discuss new approaches to the education of children of pre-school age with a particular attention to under-privileged children.

Many researches and studies have already underlined the importance of pre-school age, especially brain development and personality formation and no one would have any doubt as to the importance of this age group. However, we are regretfully obliged to agree that very little systematic effort has been made in

the field of pre-school education and millions of under-privileged young children are still left without proper educational service and care. Therefore Unesco attaches a great importance to this Meeting to give guidance and direction to stimulate a concerned action in this field in this region. You are also aware that 1979 will be the International Year of the Child and we are convinced that this Meeting will provide a useful guideline to the countries of the region to undertake a number of action at national level to celebrate the International Year of the Child.

The main purpose of the Meeting is to exchange experiences among the Member States in regard to New approaches to pre-school education with particular reference to disadvantaged populations.

The term pre-school education here is very broadly defined to include any forms of educational care of pre-school children, both formal and non-formal.

Participants are drawn from a variety of background and experiences, ranging from those representing academic and theoretical disciplines to those practitioners who are facing the problems as teachers, administrators and organizers. We are particularly happy to see Dr. Philp who was the Director of the International Institute of Child Studies in Bangkok and also presently the member of Unesco's Executive Board. We are also honoured with the presence of two resource persons from India and Philippines with a wide range of expertise and experience who will assist the Meeting. We are grateful to UNICEF to enable additional participants to attend this Meeting.

The Agenda of the Meeting is kept functional while we hope the work schedule does provide opportunities for conceptual discussions as background to the practical deliberations.

Among the major issues which the Meeting may wish to discuss are:

- What is the function of early childhood education? Is it merely to support later schooling or to prevent future drop-outs?

Is it a form of education for privileged children, mainly in an urban milieu? Has it a function in the overall

strategy of socio-economic development and above all educational development? What role does it play in overall strategy of reducing and eliminating poverty and misery? What are the dimension of its contribution to realization of equal educational opportunities and of egalitarian principles and social equity?

- Are there indigenous models for early childhood education or are we limited only to those models developed in developed countries? Is there a need to develop indigenous models that take into account the social, economic and cultural milieu of the people of the region and also of financial constraints? If so what would be the possible guidelines for policies, strategies and operational programmes?
- What are the problems in developing mass programmes in early childhood education and what guidelines may be suggested to overcome many obstacles and constraints?
- What would be the role of existing social institutions which are traditionally defined "non-educational" institutions? What inter-sectoral, inter-ministerial co-operation would be required.
- What curricula, methodology and materials are suitable and desirable and what would be the requirement of training personnel? What further researches and studies would be needed?

These questions are just an indication of our concerns and they are not exhaustive, and you are free to elaborate them further in a more systematic manner on the basis of your expertise and experiences.

If I am allowed to use a very crude phrase, I may say that we have paid enough "lip-services" to this important problem and the time has come, or even it is overdue, that a serious effort needs to be initiated to tackle the matter more systematically and to appeal to policy-makers and planners in each country to move into fully committed actions in the field.

We hope that this Meeting will provide a functional forum for both discussion and exchange of experiences and for the development of practical suggestions for action by Member States individually and collectively, and by Unesco.

Appendix III

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